

# UNDERSTANDING THE NEED



## Chapter 1

## THE CITY OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS SKATE PARK MASTER PLAN



## 1.1 Introduction



The development of a Skate Park Master Plan (SPMP) will provide the City of Arlington the opportunity to deliver a variety of skate facilities to a broad spectrum of skateboarders throughout the City. Skateboarding is enthusiastically and regularly participated in by a significant number of residents. Through examination of the trends and needs, the first initiative is to develop a single, centrally located skate park facility that will accommodate the most participants within the City.

The City of Arlington does not currently have any municipal or formal recreational facilities for skateboarding. Often times, participants build their own ramps. These facilities, when constructed on public lands, may be unsafe and create a liability to local governments. There is a need for a professionally developed facility to accommodate this culture/sport.

The selection of an appropriate site for development of an initial, City-wide skateboarding facility was determined through a methodological and detailed approach. The resulting professional opinion on a preferred site supports user needs and responds to the greatest public interest.

The consulting team also carefully considered site selection criteria that identify a logical array of potential sites and facility types. The sites were presented to the public to gauge overall support and solicit feedback. Through stakeholder feedback, public input, staff review, and professional consulting, a network of skateboarding opportunities has been suggested, with an initial facility site identified for construction in 2012.

The long-term goal of this strategy is to identify a combination of skate spots, neighborhood skate facilities, community skate facilities, and a single, City-wide skate facility that will offer the City's skateboarders a place to practice and participate in close proximity to their homes. Due to safety concerns for pedestrians and park users, this study attempts to integrate the SPMP with the vision for trails throughout the City. This master plan will help to ensure that the City of Arlington accommodates skateboarders and other action sports within parks planning and development efforts over the next 20 years.





## 1.2 Goals and Objectives

1. The primary goal of the master plan is to guide the planning and development of a network of skate facilities that encompasses and connects the entire City – centralized and decentralized.
2. To establish design guidelines for each facility in order to provide appropriate differentiation of the facilities on a city-wide scale.
3. To develop site criteria (visibility, parking, neighborhood impacts, noise, crime, trash, graffiti, etc.) for the selection of appropriate skate park locations.
4. To provide skating opportunities within 15 minutes of all residents through the trail network.
5. To promote skateboarding as a legitimate recreational activity within the community.
6. To provide cost analysis for the different types of skate park facilities to assist City staff in on-going capital and operations budgeting.
7. To facilitate public/private partnership opportunities.
8. To add skateboarding vibrancy to the City of Arlington while helping to build strong and healthy neighborhoods.
9. To promote tourism and economic opportunities as they relate to skate park usage.
10. To select a location for the City-wide skate park.
11. To recommend a prioritization for facility development over the next 5 years and then full build out in 20 years.
12. To build a sense of community through walkability and skateability by linking with the Hike and Bike System Master Plan.





Human-scale development is a key element of civic and social infrastructure that supports community. Jan Gehl – notable Scandinavian Architect, has said “Life takes place on foot” (Schmitz and Scully, 2006). In a growing number of American cities, the urban environment has been shaped by automobiles and a sense of walkability and social interaction on trails, sidewalks, and in parks has declined in favor of speedy transport. The cumulative effect is reduced activity among all age demographics and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle for American youth.

A number of challenges exist to increasing community connectivity: single use zoning; natural barriers; large-scale housing developments; traffic engineering; parking requirements; and public approval process. The challenge for any parks network is to encourage usage and community health through connectivity. A goal of the SPMP is to link with the Hike and Bike System Master Plan and encourage usage through the existing and proposed trail system. By doing so, the user group is better served with safe access to new facilities. In addition, overall community connectivity and physical activity are enhanced through walking, biking and skating.

The Urban Land Institute suggests a number of ways to make any community more walkable:

- a. Destinations for drawing people.
- b. Pedestrian scale – distances short enough to walk or ride a bike (or skateboard).
- c. Interconnected destinations for a continuous network of safe, convenient and comfortable trails and pathways.
- d. Achieving increased safety from crime, traffic and varied weather conditions. Achieving this goal has as much to do with perception as it does with reality.

The SPMP attempts to achieve a more compact community and encourage activity through thoughtful linkage of skate parks and skate opportunities. The strategy for achieving a full network of skate parks is based upon walkability, and safe distances to and from participants’ homes, schools, and places of work. It’s important to bear in mind that skate parks will address the majority of the needs for skaters, however, some skaters will still feel the need to explore and travel to other places. This is part of the culture of skating. For the past 50 years (the time period skateboards have been mass produced), skaters have been practicing nomadic behaviors exploring built form and locating and creating new challenges. This behavior in part defines who skateboarders are. Therefore, there will always be a segment of the population that will challenge authority and explore the world outside the confines of the skate park.





## 1.3 Skate Park Advisory Committee (SPAC)

The SPAC serves in an advisory capacity to City staff and the Parks and Recreation Board regarding the development of a skate park master plan. The committee is comprised of twenty-four (24) citizen representatives from all areas of the City who have diverse backgrounds (skateboarding community, neighborhood representatives, Park Board members, City staff, business owners, technical specialists, etc.). The list of the current members of SPAC can be found in the table to the right. The roles and responsibilities are to:

- Represent the full breadth of skate park users and those interested in their success.
- Act as liaisons to the community of users and broader community for skate park issues and advocate for skate park issues with staff.
- Serve as a forum for building consensus.
- Brainstorm creative ideas that can help Arlington's skate park system reach its highest potential by growing and adapting in the most effective ways.
- Explore and vet new ideas such as "skate spots".
- Help prioritize the development of future skate park sites.
- Advise recreation and maintenance staff on user and community issues and concerns.
- Develop a draft skate park system plan that addresses a range of community issues.
- Investigate potential funding opportunities through private donations, grants and other means and develop partnerships with interested organizations.
- Help prioritize the development of future skate park sites.
- Ensure that skate facilities are considered when planning begins for undeveloped parks.

City Staff	Matt Young
City Staff	De'Onna Garner
City Staff	Jason Landrem
City Staff	Terri Lynch
Park Board	Sue Phillips
Business: Lincoln Square	Pam Dawson
Business: Parks Mall	Danelle Smith
Business: Skate Shop	Katie Gabriel
Youth	Austin England
Youth	Chandler New
Youth	Justin Moore
Youth	Ricky Moore
Youth	Garrett Spicer
Adult	Kelly England
Adult	Kim Grobe
Adult	Charles Davis
Adult	Christine Davis
Adult	Michael Sternberg
Adult	Vincent Nelson
Adult	Eddie Evans
Adult	Matthew Osborn
Adult	Erik Shires
Adult	Exavior Zalce





## 1.4 Assessing the Need for Skate Parks

	TOTAL POPULATION			7-11 YEARS			12-17 YEARS		
	1998	2010	% Change	1998	2010	% Change	1998	2010	% Change
Total U.S.	242,884	280,215	15.4%	19,876	20,554	3.4%	23,241	24,645	6.0%
Skateboarding	5,782	7,706	33.3%	2,309	2,302	-0.3%	2,253	2,687	19.3%

Figure 1.1: Youth Participation in Selected Sports 2010 (in thousands) (nsga.org)

	1998 Total	2010 Total	% Change
Snowboarding	3.6	6.1	69.4%
Running/Jogging	22.5	35.5	57.8%
Hiking	27.2	37.7	38.6%
Skateboarding	5.8	7.7	33.3%
Exercise Walking	77.6	95.8	23.5%
Paintball Games	5.1	6.1	19.6%
Football	8.1	9.3	14.8%
Tennis	11.2	12.3	9.8%
Soccer	13.2	13.5	2.3%
Bowling	40.1	39.0	-2.7%
Basketball	29.4	26.9	-8.5%
Swimming	58.2	51.9	-10.8%
Golf	27.5	21.9	-20.4%
Baseball	15.9	12.5	-21.4%
Fishing	43.6	33.8	-22.5%
Softball	15.6	10.8	-30.8%
Inline Roller Skating	27.0	7.4	-72.6%

Figure 1.2: Ranked by Percentage Change by NSGA, Participant more than once (in millions) seven years of age and older (nsga.org)

The Arlington Parks and Recreation Department conducted a survey to assess the need for skate parks within the community. Through the Spring and Summer of 2010, 468 residents responded to a formal survey. The survey responses provide a clear and specific characterization of skateboarders, their families, and the current need for skate park facilities within the City.

Using the survey results from Arlington residents, in conjunction with national statistics on skateboarding participation, the consulting team was able to extrapolate needs for skateable terrain and locations throughout the City. The most notable and reliable source for skateboarding statistics is the National Sporting Goods Association of the United States (NSGA). For the purpose of this strategic plan, the national averages posted by the NSGA in the following adjacent tables was used as a baseline participation rate for Arlington youth.

Utilizing the participation rates noted above, the estimated number of skateboarders within the City of Arlington that skateboard more than once per week is 18,652. See Section 2.8 for further explanation of calculations.



## Survey

The Parks and Recreation Department developed a 25 question survey that helped to characterize the sport of skateboarding within the City of Arlington. The response to the survey was tremendous with 468 respondents providing valuable information about stakeholders, the user group, habits, priorities, and preferences. This survey helped to guide the consulting team in the strategic development of a network of skate parks in the City of Arlington. The entire results from the survey can be reviewed in the appendices of this report.

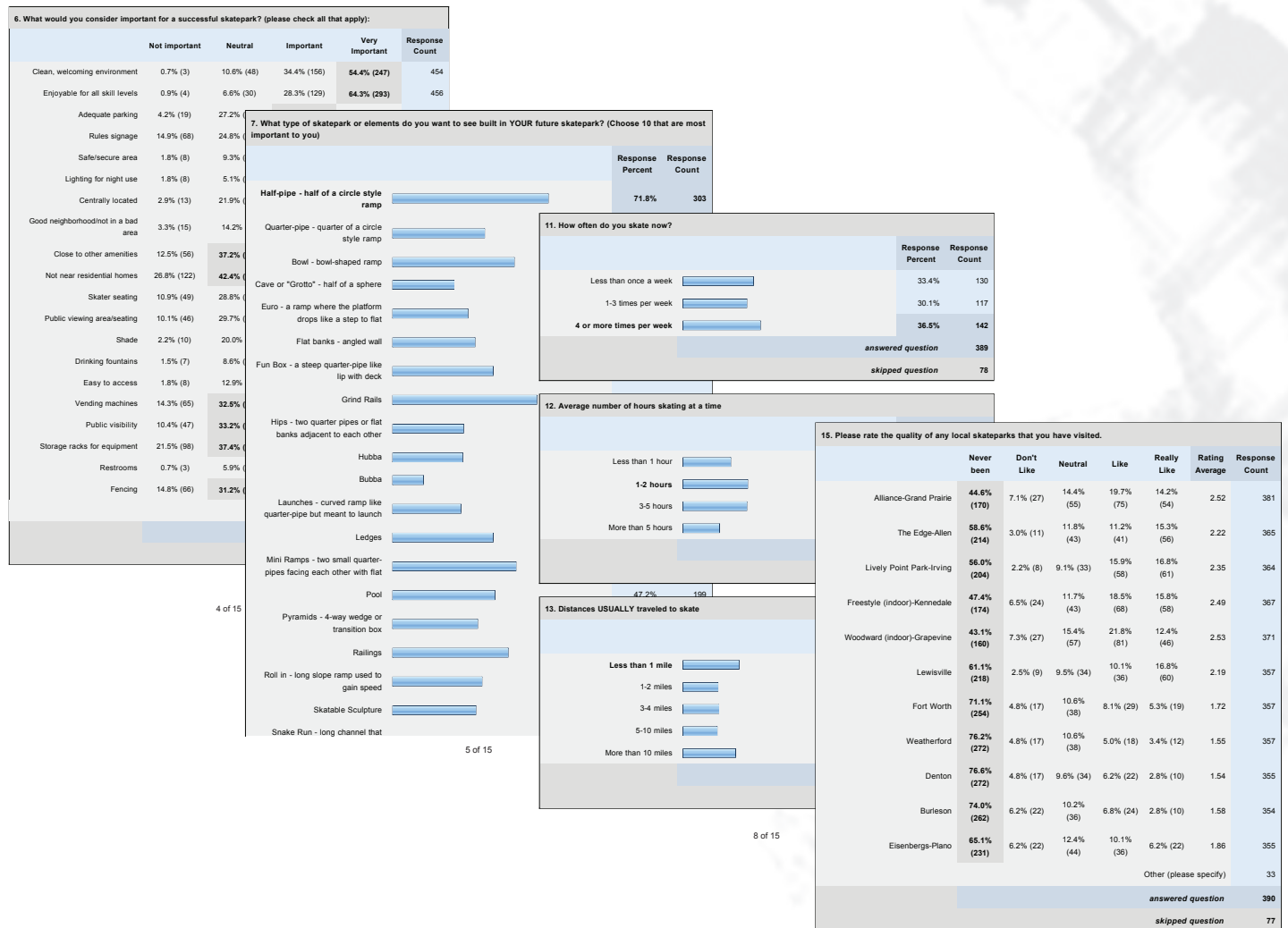


Figure 1.3: Sample Sheets  
(Skate Park Survey)







## 1.5 Profile of a Skateboarder

Skateboarders are passionate; internally driven to creatively express themselves and to experience built form. They typically hold their personal development in high regard, and adopt nomadic behaviors as they search for new terrain to challenge and refine their skills. In their pursuit to fulfill these interests, participants often discover common ground and a sense of community. The perseverance acquired in developing proficiency on a skateboard often contributes to the development of other widely applicable transferable skills, such as personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, teamwork, and entrepreneurialism. Skateboarding is many things to many people, including but not limited to: a vehicle for transportation and to experience built form; a sport in which to be competitive; a tool for creative expression; and, a tool for meditation to help find greater mental and physical health.

There are currently no skate parks in Arlington, and no legal places to practice skateboarding on public property. A large youth demographic is left with no place to recreate in their activity of choice. This has resulted in some travel beyond city limits to nearby cities with dedicated facilities (40.8% of respondents to the Survey). In light of these circumstances, most skateboarders in Arlington take to the streets (67.5% according to the Survey), where they face disapproving looks, conflicts with local authorities, tickets for trespassing, and arrest.







## 1.6 Skateboarding Opportunities in the Region

Within the surrounding cities of Arlington, there are several skate parks currently utilized by local skate park participants.



Allen, Texas  
The Edge Skate Park  
Distance: 44 miles



Irving, Texas  
Lively Point Skate Park  
Distance: 17 miles



Denton, Texas  
Skate Works Park  
Distance: 45 miles



Kennedale, Texas  
Private Facility  
The Pier (indoor)  
Distance: 12 miles

White Settlement, Texas  
WSX Skate Park  
Distance: 24 miles



Lewisville, Texas  
Railroad Skate Park  
Distance: 22 miles



Grand Prairie, Texas  
Private Facility  
Alliance Skate Park  
Distance: 8 miles



Watauga, Texas  
Watauga Skate Park  
Distance: 21 miles

